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AN EXPOSITION OF THE UNCERTAINTIES IN THE *Practice of* PHYSIC.

Written originally in *Spanish* by

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

TO THE

Engliſh READER.

THE following Piece is ſelected from a Collection of Miſcellaneous Tracts by the ſame Author, intitled, *Theatro Critico Univerſal*, in nine Volumes quarto. The profeſſed Deſign of the Author is to explode vulgar Errors, which he does with a Freedom ſurpriſing in a *Spaniard*, and with a Decency peculiar to true Wit and good Senſe. Of his univerſal Learning the Reader will form a Judgment, when he conſiders, that the Subject of this Tract was foreign to his own Profeſſion. It was too intereſting to paſs unanſwered, and dull Men had a fine Opportunity for Raillery at a Prieſt who ventured out of his Science. However he replied to no more than two. One

of them was Don *Martin Martinez*, an eminent Phyſician, his intimate Friend, who had oppoſed him with great Temper and Politeneſs. The other was an obſcure Writer, whoſe Abſurdities he diverted himſelf with. In his Reply to the former, he conſiders an Objection very naturally made, that other Sciences labour under Uncertainty as well as Medicine. His Anſwer is, that he is partial to no Science, not even his own, but that he apprehends a notable Difference between Medicine and other Sciences in that Reſpect.

It is true, ſays he, the *Divine* knows not whether his Penitent ſhall be ſaved; but he knows for certain, what the Penitent ſhould do in order to Salvation; whereas the Phyſician can never be aſſured, what Conduct, or Medicine, or Regimen will recover his Patient.

The *Military* Art is fallible, but in Caſe of War, it is neceſſary. The Enemy would certainly triumph without ſome Reſiſtance. The ſame is not to be pleaded for Medicine, even in Caſe of a Diſeaſe; for Nature often reſiſts it without the Aid of a Phyſician. The General commonly knows the Enemy he is to engage; the Phyſician is often ignorant of

of the Diſeaſe he undertakes to cure. If a General diſcovers the Enemy to be ſuperior in Strength, he avoids an Engagement; the Phyſician is obliged to attack the Diſeaſe, even tho' he perceives Nature too weak for the Conflict. A General never joins the Enemy, unleſs, which very ſeldom happens, he be a Traitor; a Phyſician frequently, thro' Ignorance, aſſiſts the Diſeaſe againſt the Patient. It may ſeem a Queſtion, which deſtroys moſt? But the Queſtion is ſolved by yourſelf in your *Medicina Sceptica*, where you affirm of one Maxim in *Galen*, that Artillery itſelf hath not diſpatch'd ſo many Men. If one erroneous Maxim in Medicine hath made more Havock than all the Ordinance upon Earth, what Slaughter have ſo many erroneous Maxims produced! for certain it is, that of two contradictory Opinions one muſt be falſe.

Mathematicks are not to be put in Competition with Phyſic in point of Uncertainty, ſince they never fail of Demonſtration, excepting in two Caſes, *viz.* when Men forget, that they are the Object of human Underſtanding, and therefore finite; and when in applying them, they venture beyond their Sphere.

As to Politicks, that which aſſumes the Name of it in the World, I judge to be more uncertain than Medicine. And with reſpect to Stateſmen, I know of no Policy ſecure but what is founded in Juſtice and Prudence.

Thus far our Author anſwers the moſt obvious Objection ariſing from the Peruſal of this Tract. In another Paſſage he clears himſelf from the Charge of *rigid Scepticiſm.*

" A rigid Sceptic, ſays he, is one who admits nothing to be certain, and in Matters of Opinion, keeps himſelf in perfect Suſpence, leſt he ſhould allow an Inequality in the Probable between two oppoſite Opinions. This is not my Character; for I think there is ſomething *certain* in Medicine, and I admit Inequality in what is merely *probable.* It is true, I incline to Scepticiſm, and I know not how to remedy it; for the very Phyſicians, who ſhould cure me of this Diſeaſe, if it be a Diſeaſe, rather increaſe it. I ſee them almoſt univerſally divided in their Practice. And if *they* have not aſcertained the Truth, what need I apologize for my Doubts? I have not read many Medical Authors, but I have read enough to convince me, that

that there is hardly an Aſſertion in Phyſic uncontroverted. If I had read more, probably my Doubts would have increaſed; which was exactly the Caſe of *Ramazzini*, who ſays of himſelf, "*Idem* "*prorſus mihi evenire ſentio, ac Teren-* "*tiano ſeni, qui cum in filii ſui cauſâ* "*plures Advocatos accerſiſſet, eoſque in-* "*ter ſe pugnantes deprehendiſſet, Incer-* "*tior* (*inquit*) *multò ſum quamdu-* "*dum.*"

Upon this Account, and that of the undeniable Contradiction between Authors, Phyſicians will pardon me for ſaying, that they know little of the Cure of the Sick. Undoubtedly they know more of it than Divines, becauſe whatever is known, is known by them. But that they know very little, appears from this plain Syllogiſm,

> *That which is dubious is not known;*
> *In Phyſic almoſt every thing is dubious,*
> *Therefore, almoſt every thing in Phyſic is unknown.*"

For the Truth of his minor Propoſition he refers to various Authors, ſome of which are cited in the following Piece.

This

This Publication is propoſed as a Specimen of a great Variety of entertaining and uſeful Treatiſes on the common Prejudices of Mankind; ſome of them long ſince exploded, ſome ſtill prevailing among us. The Author is a Free-thinker, and as ſuch will certainly meet with at leaſt as favourable a Reception in *England*, as in *Spain*, where he has already paſſed ſeven Editions.

A N

AN EXPOSITION OF THE UNCERTAINTIES IN THE *Practice of* PHYSIC.

SECT. I.

THE too great Confidence generally placed in Medicine by the Vulgar, proves inconvenient to the Phyſician, and pernicious to the Patient. To the Phyſician it is inconvenient, becauſe the immediate Relief, which the Sick, in every Caſe, hope to find in his Art, puts him under a Neceſſity of multiplying Viſits, which for the moſt part might be diſpens'd with. The Conſequence is, that he has but little

time left for Study, and none for that principal Branch of his Study, Obſervation and Reflection.——To the Patient this Confidence is pernicious; becauſe it tempts him to heap Medicines upon Medicines, which in great Quantities are always hurtful, and often fatal. The Emperor *Adrian* choſe for his monumental Inſcription, *Turbâ Medicorum perii*. It might with more Truth be inſcrib'd upon the Graves of moſt Men, *Turbâ Remediorum perii*. An Attempt therefore to remove the public Prejudices on this Head, may, if it ſucceed, be of ſome Uſe to Mankind.

To guard againſt Equivocation of any ſort, we muſt divide Phyſic into three States, a State of Perfection, a State of Imperfection, and a State of Corruption. The State of Perfection in Phyſic is barely poſſible, and that Poſſibility I apprehend to be very remote. There is little or no Proſpect, that Men will ever arrive at a Knowledge of all Diſeaſes, which this State requires, or prove their Remedies to be infallible, unleſs it be by the means of Revelation.

Phyſic therefore in its firſt State is foreign to my Purpoſe, ſince no ſuch State exiſts in the World, and if it did, it would have an undoubted Claim to all that Faith, with which Men commonly have

have recourſe to Phyſicians as Oracles. I have only to ſhew then, how *fallible* it is in the middle State, and thence will be evident how *falſe* are its Pretences in the State of Corruption.

SECT. II.

IN order to demonſtrate how little Reaſon the poor Patient has to place any Confidence in Medicine, it will ſuffice to verify the Principle here laid down, that the Medical Art, as it is practiſed by its moſt learned Profeſſors, is hitherto very imperfect. But this is a Matter of Fact, for they themſelves confeſs it. It would be needleſs to evidence this Truth, by alledging the Authority of ancient Writers, for perhaps the Anſwer would be, that the Practice of Phyſic has been much improv'd ſince their Time; I ſhall only quote ſome of the moſt eminent among the Moderns.

The learned *Michael Etmuller*, whoſe Abilities no one can deny to have been excellent both in Theory and Practice, frequently complains of the little Knowledge, which hath hitherto been acquired in Simples, of the Doubtfulneſs of Symptoms, of the Inefficacy of the Remedies now in Uſe. But, which is more particularly to our Purpoſe, he acknowledges

in the general Preface to his ſecond Volume, that Medicine can ſeldom do more than remedy the Symptoms, or *Effects* of the Diſeaſe; but that the *Eſſence* of it remains unmov'd, 'till Nature alone overcomes it. And this he imputes to the Ignorance of Phyſicians, either in the Cauſes of Diſeaſes, or in the Remedies proper to be applied. He adds, that all learned Phyſicians ſee and lament this Imperfection of their Art, whereas the Ignorant are perfectly ſatisfied with the Miracles they perform.

Baglivi is the next I ſhall quote. His great Reputation among thoſe of his Profeſſion appears from hence, that his *Practica Medica*, which was firſt printed at *Rome* in 1695, did, in the Space of thirty Years, paſs ten Editions. This great Writer, after having aſſigned the Cauſes which obſtruct the Progreſs of Phyſic, affirms, that the Medical Books, which have hitherto been written, afford ſo little Light, that the moſt learned Practitioners are wandering in the dark, without knowing whom to believe, what Doctrine to follow, what Courſe to take in the Cure of Diſeaſes; that the Practice of Phyſic at this time in Vogue, is corrupted by a thouſand falſe or uſeleſs Maxims; and in ſhort, that Phyſic, ſo far from

from being advanced to any Degree of Maturity, ought ſtill to be conſider'd as in its Infancy.

Thomas Sydenham, famous throughout *Europe*, as the moſt eminent of his Profeſſion in the laſt Century, after having read many Books, after having obſerv'd with the moſt watchful Attention for many Years, the Steps which Nature takes in Diſeaſes, ſpeaks with more Uncertainty and Perplexity, than thoſe yet mention'd. We can hardly read his Preſcriptions without perceiving, that he wrote them with a trembling Hand. He lays open his Doubts and his Ignorance with a noble Sincerity, a Beauty which adorns his Writings, even more than that pure Latinity, by which they are diſtinguiſh'd. He ſhews that his Confidence in his own Experience was very limited, and that he had little or none in the Doctrine of Authors. Of theſe he ſays, that they eaſily propoſe the Cure of many Diſeaſes, which neither themſelves, nor any other Perſon hath been able to cure to this Day. A great Piece of Guilt without Doubt in thoſe Writers to deceive the Public with the Oſtentation of Remedies, which they themſelves experience to be uſeleſs; and to expoſe the unhappy Phyſicians, who ſtudy their Works,

Works, to Ridicule, both in point of Cure and Prognoſtic, after having conſumed, by a Variety of Medicines, the Patient's Fortune and Conſtitution.

The ſame *Sydenham* elſewhere confeſſes of himſelf, that when he thought to obtain, by long Study and continual Obſervation, a ſecure Method of treating all kinds of Fevers, he found, that he had only opened his Eyes in order to fill them with Duſt. Such was the Confuſion and Perplexity of a great Genius after much Study!

Some Years after theſe ſeveral Authors, M. *le François*, a graduate Phyſician of *Paris*, publiſhed his critical Reflexions on the Subject of Phyſic, where he with equal Earneſtneſs laments the very ſhort Progreſs of this Art; and in ſpeaking of the Writers, he has the following remarkable Words: " The Difficulty there " is in making Obſervations with all the " Care and Accuracy requiſite; the " Multitude of different Diſeaſes, which " perplex thoſe who find them very " much alike in their eſſential Circum- " ſtances; the little Regard which the " Public always pays to Obſervers; the " high Eſteem, on the contrary, beſtow- " ed upon the Inventors of Syſtems, " and upon their Followers, all theſe

" are

" are the Reaſons, why among ſuch " a Number of Treatiſes in Phyſic, " with which the World is ſurfeited, " there are very few of great Utili- " ty. Nay, one might venture to ſay, " there is not one that may be whol- " ly relied on." If this be ſo, as in truth it is, then Phyſicians are in the dark in the Exerciſe of their Profeſſion; for beſides the Difficulty they labour under of diſtinguiſhing the few uſeful Books from the Multitude that are uſeleſs, in order to read the one, and reject the other, which many are incapable of doing, eſpecially ſince there are as many Opinions on this Subject as on all the reſt, ſome commending the Practice of one Author, others of another; beſides all this, there remains, ſince thoſe few uſeful Treatiſes are not to be entirely depended upon, the arduous Task of learning when, and how far to rely upon the Doctrine contained in them, and when not.

The ſame Author, in the Year 1716, publiſh'd a Project for reforming the Practice of Phyſic, in which he demonſtrates at large the great Imperfection this Art labours under even at this Time. Among the Cauſes, he aſſigns the Uſeleſsneſs of Medical Books in ſtronger Terms than thoſe

thoſe before cited, for he aſſerts, that the Treatiſes which have been written on this Art, are full of *Obſcurity*, of *Uncertainty*, and of *Falſhood*. I cannot here omit what he had before ſaid of the State of Phyſic in *France*, ſince it is very much to our preſent Purpoſe: "Though there is no Country where "new Eſtabliſhments to perfect the Art "of Phyſic are not highly neceſſary, yet "they are more requiſite in *France* than "elſewhere, for a general Irregularity "in the Practice of Phyſic is no where "ſo prevalent as in *France*." Hence the Candour of my Countrymen is ſomewhat ridiculous; as ſoon as a Phyſician arrives from *France*, who leaves but a moderate Reputation behind him, we flatter ourſelves the Public has gained a Man, whoſe Skill can raiſe the Dead to Life.

It is not long ſince Don *Martin Martinez*, an ingenious *Spaniard*, in his two Volumes *De Medicinâ Scepticâ*, expos'd to the World with great Learning the Uncertainty of Phyſic. He diſputes many Maxims firmly eſtabliſhed among Phyſicians, and if his Arguments are not always concluſive to prove them falſe, they at leaſt leave them doubtful, in a certain Degree, and ſometimes hazardous.

In

In ſhort, it is as common a Caſe among Phyſicians of Learning and Ability to confeſs the Weakneſs of their Art in the Cure of Diſeaſes, as it is among the unlearned to boaſt of their Confidence in it, by way of Triumph over theſe their Enemies. Inſomuch that this is become the characteriſtical Mark to diſtinguiſh the knowing from the ignorant, as *Etmuller* judiciouſly expreſſes it in the Words before hinted at: " *Medicis ignorantibus* " *optimè ſe agere opinantibus; ſcientibus* " *vero tacitè ingemeſcentibus & ſuos de-* " *fectus adhuc deplorantibus.*" And *Conciliador* long before inſerts, in the Definition he gives of a bad Phyſician, this as an inſeparable Quality, " That he never " confeſſes his own Ignorance."

Let Mankind therefore, who are apt to ſee the Power of *Apollo* himſelf in every ordinary Phyſician, and to diſcover the Virtues of *Aurum potabile* in the moſt uſeleſs Parts of a Diſpenſary, conſider what Reliance they can have upon a Science, of which thoſe who have moſt ſtudied it are ſo diffident. If there be ſuch Uncertainty in the Maxims eſtabliſhed by the beſt Authors, with what Security can a Phyſician promiſe Health, whoſe higheſt Merit is that of having learn'd thoſe very Maxims? If the moſt

eminent Profeſſors of the Faculty have been perplexed what Courſe to follow in the Cure of Diſeaſes, what Succeſs or Relief can be expected from common Phyſicians? If the *Giants* have found themſelves weak in combating thoſe great Enemies of human Life, what Aſſiſtance can be afforded by the *Pygmies?*

SECT. III.

BUT if the Medical Writers had not thus ingenuouſly *confeſſed* the Uncertainty of their Art, their perpetual Contradictions would have *expoſed* it. Every Thing in Phyſic is controverted, therefore every Thing is diſputable. *Pedro de Apono* probably took occaſion, from the continual Wars among Phyſicians, to ſay, that Phyſic ought to have been dedicated to *Mars* inſtead of *Apollo*; tho' *Cornelius Agrippa* in his uſual Way, gives it a more malicious Turn. (*Lib. de Vanitate Scient. cap.* 83.) It is certain, that their Dogmata are and always were more contradictory, than the four Qualities of the Humors, which they obſerve in human Bodies. This has been the Misfortune of Phyſic ever ſince its Conception. The firſt Parent aſſigned or invented

ted for it was the Centaur *Chiron*, the Maſter of *Æſculapius*, in whom the Union of two Natures may be conſider'd as a Conſtellation, whoſe Influence upon Phyſic was to give Birth to all that Contradiction of Doctrines. For ſome time after, this Science was educated like an expoſed Infant. There was no other Rule for the Cure of the Sick, but to expoſe them in public Streets and Places, that thoſe who paſſed by might inſpect them and preſcribe. This produced an infinite Diverſity of Opinions, till *Hippocrates* undertook to nurſe the Foundling, and gave it Milk in the little Iſland of *Coos*, where the perpetual roaring and daſhing of the Waves may paſs for a new Preſage of an endleſs Strife of Opinions.

Next to *Hippocrates* in Fame, and not very diſtant from him in Time, were *Praxagoras* and *Diocles Caryſtius*. They altered the Doctrine of the venerable Sage, by firſt reducing all Diſeaſes to a Diſorder of the Fluids, and by farther extending the Power of the Number Seven, (to which *Hippocrates* had attributed a Juriſdiction over the critical Days) to the climacteric Years. *Herophilus* ſucceeded them, and reduced all Phyſic to Ratiocination and Diſputation. He departed from Experience and Practice with the

worſt of Deſigns, for it was he that ſeparated Art from Nature. Then came *Chryſippus* and overturned all that his Predeceſſors had advanced. His Diſciple *Eraſiſtratus*, the Grandſon of *Ariſtotle*, was not much more *faithful* to his Maſters than he, for he made great Innovations in what *Chryſippus* had taught. In this however both Maſter and Scholar agreed, to baniſh Bleeding and Purging from the Practice of Phyſic.

In the mean time ſome few Remains of the ancient Phyſic were ſtill preſerved, till *Aſclepiades* in the Age of *Pompey the Great*, totally extirpated the Doctrine of *Hippocrates*, which he inſulted, by calling it a Meditation upon Death, and admitted into the Denomination of Medicines, ſuch Things only as might relieve and refreſh the Patient. An Accident conſpired, with this Flattery of the public Taſte, to raiſe him to the higheſt Rank in his Profeſſion. He obſerved Signs of Life in a Man, who was about to be interr'd, and recover'd him ſo eaſily, that he was thought to have raiſed him from the Dead. There was another Circumſtance of great Uſe to him. He bid public Defiance to the Fates, by aſſuring the World, that he would never be ſick, and in fact he never was, not even

even at the Time of his Death, for he ended his long Life by an unlucky Fall down Stairs. *Aſclepiades* was no ſooner expired, than *Themiſon*, his Diſciple, alter'd all the Doctrine of his Maſter, and became Chief of the Sect of *Methodicks*, whoſe Reputation in *Rome* could not be very conſiderable, ſince *Juvenal* ſpeaking of the Sect under the Name of their Chief, ſays,

Quot Themiſon ægros Autumno occiderit uno.

The next who flouriſh'd was *Athenæus*, who imputed all Diſeaſes to the Emanation of certain Spirits proceeding from mix'd Bodies as well as from the Elements. After him came *Archigenes*, the Founder of the Eclectic Sect, whoſe Pretence was that of ſelecting all the Good they found in the other Sects. He was ſo ſuperſtitious an Obſerver of the Rules of his Art, that he proteſted he would never depart from one of them, even tho' the Obſervation of it ſhould be attended with the Deſtruction of a whole City.

We will paſs over the elegant *Cornelius Celſus*, who in his Works diſcovers no Attachment to any Sect, and only obſerve,

ſerve, that like *Aſclepiades*, he makes a Jeſt of the Obſervation of critical Days by odd Numbers, eſtabliſhed by *Hippocrates*. The next to him was *Galen*, doubtleſs a Man of prodigious Underſtanding, and of a ſubtle Genius, capable, had it been his Deſign, of reſtoring to the World the Doctrine of *Hippocrates*. But he rather choſe to introduce his own, under the ſpecious Pretence of defending and commenting upon the *Hippocratic* Tenets. He executed this with ſo ſurpriſing Succeſs, that he continued without Oppoſition for many Ages. The Culture of Arts and Sciences was wholly laid aſide at the Declenſion of the *Roman* Empire, by the Irruption of the *Barbarians*; and the Phyſicians, who turn'd their Thoughts to writing, did only tranſcribe from the Ancients. The *Arabians* on the other hand, who availed themſelves of this Neglect in *Europe* to become Maſters in Philoſophy and Phyſic, were Followers of *Galen*, and the chief of them, among whom were *Raſis*, *Averroes*, *Alkindo* and *Avicena*, contented themſelves with adding ſuperfluous Diſcourſes and uſeleſs Subtleties.

Thus the Empire of *Galen* ſubſiſted for a long Space of Time, truly tyrannical, on account of the vaſt Profuſion of Blood,

which

which this great Patron of the Lancet drew from the human Race. At the Beginning of the ſixteenth Century, *Paracelſus* revived the ancient Hermetic Philoſophy, and ſupplanted *Hippocrates* and *Galen* with ſuch aſtoniſhing Rapidity, that he left them neither Principle nor Concluſion. He was greatly followed upon the Merit of ſome wonderful Cures of Diſeaſes that were judged incurable, and thoſe perhaps not ſtrictly true, for the only Teſtimony we have of them is that of his Diſciple *Oporinus*. However he died in the forty-eighth Year of his Age, and thereby falſified in himſelf his repeated Boaſts, that the ſuperior Virtue of his Medicines was capable of prolonging the Life of Man for ſeveral Ages. *Van Helmont* was one of the Followers of *Paracelſus*, who likewiſe is ſaid to have performed wonderful Cures, and to have improv'd upon his Maſter by adding his own Notions of the *Anima Mundi*, or ignific Virtue, which pervades and actuates all things.

Next the Chemical School, or as ſome call it, the ſecond Hermetic Sect was erected. As it was founded in Experiments performed by the Violence of Fire, it admitted of no other Principles, either of Exiſtence, or of Health, and Sick-

Sickneſs, than Salt, Sulphur and Mercury. *Tachenius* ſprung from this School, and raiſed a new Mode, or enforced one which was already in Vogue, for *Acid* and *Alkali* became, according to his Plan, the Whigs and Tories * of Natural Philoſophy. This Diviſion was the Work of Fortune, and it left the whole to *Galen*, though without any Proteſt againſt *Hippocrates*, whom he ſtill claimed as his Patron.

As Anatomy was in the mean time cultivated, *Sylvius*, *Willis* and others formed particular Syſtems, equally oppoſite to the Chemiſts and the *Galeniſts*. *Sanctorius*, on the other ſide, produced that plauſible Scheme of *Mathematical Phyſic*, which conſiders the alternate Power of the Solids and Fluids in our Bodies, by the Rules of *Statics* and *Mechanics*. And the Phyſician, like *Catharine de Medicis* in *France*, is obliged to uſe the utmoſt Care to preſerve an exact Balance between the two oppoſite Parties, inclining ſometimes to one Party, ſometimes to the other; for a poſitive Declaration, on which ever ſide it falls,

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* *Los Acidos y Alkalis, que vienen a ſer, ſegun ſu planta, los* Uvigts *y* Toris *de la Naturaleza.*

would

would threaten Ruin to this choleric Commonwealth.

Thus they proceeded varying their Syſtems, and ſubverting one another, till the more judicious Phyſicians, weary either of their Number or their Uncertainty, took another Courſe; they ſearched Nature herſelf, and truſted to Experience alone. It is certain, that ſince the great *Bacon* of *Verulam* had open'd the Eyes of Phyſicians and Philoſophers, by convincing them, that this was the only Rout whereby they could make the leaſt Progreſs in either Faculty, there have been ſome of them wiſe enough to caſt an Eye upon Experience, and carefully to collect ſome Obſervations, tho' for the moſt part defective, as we have before ſhewn. In effect this Method prevails among the Phyſicians of Genius throughout *Europe*, tho' the greater Part of them, notwithſtanding they are entirely divorced from *Galen*, continue nevertheleſs to fight faithfully under the Banners of *Hippocrates*, whoſe Doctrine, they ſay, doth always coincide with their own Experience.

Baglivi, tho' a great Promoter of Obſervations, and a declared Enemy to Syſtems, yet being captivated with the Novelty of Statics in Phyſic, knew not how to give it up; like thoſe profligate Rakes,

who are criminally attached to one Woman, whilſt they make the tender Sex in general the Subject of Raillery and Invective. But in truth this Syſtem enjoys no more Privileges than the reſt, unleſs being of modern Date it may reſemble Infants, in whom every Look and Geſture is engaging. In effect *Baglivi*, meaning to reconcile the three Votes of *Hippocrates*, his own Syſtem, and common Obſervation, attempted to eſtabliſh in this Triumvirate an abſolute Power in the Practice of Phyſic. And indeed the Generality of modern Phyſicians will pardon his Attempt of reconciling *Hippocrates* with Experience, they having at this time with a very high hand re-eſtabliſhed the Reputation of that ancient Sage. Some however there are, who affirm with more Caution, that the Maxims of *Hippocrates* are not eaſily examined by the Light of Obſervation; and here and there one is bold enough to diſavow his Doctrine entirely. *Synapius*, for Inſtance, a Phyſician of *Hungary*, who within a few Years paſt publiſhed a Tract entitled, *De Vanitate, Falſitate & Incertitudine Aphoriſmorum Hippocratis.*

We muſt omit ſome things in this Hiſtorical View of Phyſic, ſuch as the Diviſion of it into the three Branches of Empyric,

Empyric, Methodic and Rational, and a Hiſtory of thoſe eminent Perſons, who have from time to time patronized each of theſe Branches. It would ſwell this Tract beyond my preſent Deſign, and the Contradictions already pointed out, may ſuffice to ſhew the *great Uncertainty of the Science.*

SECT. IV.

BUT after all theſe Debates, Controverſies and Revolutions, are Phyſicians agreed? Not in the leaſt. They are as much divided at this Time, as ever. For they go on increaſing Variations, as they have done multiplying Books. At preſent they are divided into *Hippocratiſts*, *Galeniſts*, *Chymiſts* and *pure Experimentaliſts*; for as to the *Paracelſiſts* and *Helmontians*, they are almoſt entirely demoliſh'd. And they take different Meaſures in their Practice according to this difference of Parties. For it is a manifeſt Miſtake, which ſome pretend, that Phyſicians, who profeſs different Syſtems, agree in their Practice. *Etmuller* affirms the contrary (*Inſtit. Medic. part* 3. *cap.* 2.) " *Prout hypotheſes* " *Medicorum, ſeu judicia variant, etiam* " *variat medendi Methodus: alia nempe* " *eſt Galenica, Paracelſica, Poteriana,* " &c." And in the Writings of the Fol-

lowers of the ſeveral Syſtems, there is great Contrariety in their Preſcriptions for Practice. We need only conſult *Dolæus*, and we ſhall find, that after accounting for every Diſeaſe according to the ſeveral Syſtems, the Cure he propoſes is varied under each Syſtem.

But this Difference and Contrariety of Opinion is not only obſervable between Phyſicians of different Syſtems, but even among thoſe who follow the ſame. Thus in *Spain* almoſt all the Phyſicians are *Galeniſts*, and it ſeldom happens, that two or three, if conſulted ſeparately, agree in a Cure; which gives room to ſuſpect, that their apparent Concurrence afterward is the Effect of Policy rather than Sentiment. But it does not even reſt here. We may obſerve the ſame Oppoſition which prevails between the Followers of the ſame Syſtem, among thoſe, who are intirely govern'd in their Practice by the ſame Author. *Lazarus Riverius* is the general Guide of our ordinary Phyſicians, who, if they read other Authors, make uſe of them in Converſation rather than in their Practice. And yet all the World is a Witneſs, how often they diſagree; one Phyſician preſcribes this Medicine, anothes adviſes his Patient to that. One fixes upon one Preſcription in *Riverius*, another

ther chooſes ſome other, nay the ſame Practitioner ſometimes underſtands him differently, which I myſelf have experienced more than once. One Doctor calls your Diſeaſe a *Plethory*, and preſcribes Bleeding; another judges it to be a *Cacochymia*, and inſiſts on a Purge; if a third ſhould come and find both Methods ineffectual, he would improve upon the reſt in interpreting the Symptoms.

SECT. V.

AMIDST all this Diſcord of Phyſicians, ariſing partly from the Contrariety ſubſiſting between Authors, partly from the different Senſes in which they are underſtood, and partly from the various Obſervations and Judgment formed of the Symptoms, What becomes of the poor Patient? Shall he, if the Choice depends upon him, call in the moſt skilful Phyſician? It often happens, that he cannot know who deſerves this Character. Public Applauſe is in many Caſes deceitful, and the Effect of Art and Policy rather than Merit. An ignorant Pretender may riſe to Reputation from an Accident, whilſt a learned Practitioner owes his Diſgrace to a ſingle Miſtake. This was the Caſe of *Andreas Veſalius*, who apprehending

ing a Gentleman to be dead, whom he had attended himſelf, order'd his Body to be diſſected; but the Anatomiſts had no ſooner made an Inciſion, than manifeſt Signs of Life appeared; inſomuch that the unfortunate Gentleman died of the Wound, and not of his Diſeaſe. If the Patient ſhould have the good Fortune to conſult a more learned Phyſician betimes, yet he cannot promiſe himſelf more Safety. *Juan Argenterio* was eſteemed a Prodigy of Learning, yet the Sick who fell into his Hands, all either died or incurred other more malignant Diſeaſes; till at laſt no one deſired his Aſſiſtance.

But admitting all the Merit of a learned Phyſician, yet his Preſcription will be hazardous, whilſt it contradicts the Practice of other Doctors, as learned as himſelf. Reaſon and Experience are univerſally alledged. What Thread ſhall *Ariadne* give to enable either the Phyſician or the Patient to penetrate thro' this Labyrinth. There is hardly a Maxim relating to the Cure of Diſeaſes, which is not controverted, not even excepting that celebrated one, *Contraria Contrariis curanda ſunt.* And certainly this Principle taken in a general Senſe is either falſe or uſeleſs. It is uſeleſs, if by the Contrariety on the Part of the Medicine is meant, as ſome apprehend,

prehend, the Virtue which expels the morbific Matter; for in this Senſe it is a ſelf-evident Truth, and means no more than this, that the morbific Matter may be removed by that which can remove it. The Maxim is falſe, if underſtood of the Contrariety of ſenſible Qualities, ſince all Contraries of this ſort are not Remedies, and there are infinite Numbers of Remedies, which are not Contraries of this ſort. The firſt appears from hence, that all Fevers are not cured by cooling Medicines. They are rather in many Caſes dangerous. It is often neceſſary to increaſe the Heat of the Fever, which in itſelf is languid, in order to promote Fermentation, and aſſiſt Nature in the Work ſhe is carrying on within us, and by her means ſecrete and remove what moleſts her. The ſecond is plain from the Nature of all Specificks, in which there is no Contrariety of manifeſt Qualities to thoſe of the Diſeaſes, to which they are applied. Or if they interpret this Axiom of the Contrariety in occult Qualities, or, as others explain it, of an Oppoſition *à totâ ſubſtantiâ*, then it is equally uſeleſs. For this Oppoſition is not diſcovered by Philoſophy, but by Experience. And if by Experience I diſcover, that ſuch a Remedy is oppoſed to ſuch a Diſeaſe, there is not the leaſt

Neceſſity

Neceſſity for this Axiom. Nay, it may be ſaid, that even in this Senſe it is falſe; for there are Medicines which operate not by Contrariety, but in the Way of Harmony and Friendſhip; ſuch are Abſorbents, which imbibe the morbific Matter by the Conformity of their Pores to the Figure of its Particles.

But leaving this Principle, of which even the Phyſicians who eſpouſe it make no Uſe in their Practice, let us deſcend to Particulars, and conſider the Doubts, which occur in the moſt common Medicines, in order to ſhew how little, if at all, they may be depended upon.

SECT. VI.

THE firſt that offers itſelf to our Conſideration is Bleeding. This Remedy, if we may believe *Pliny* and *Solinus*, was derived to Mankind from an amphibious Animal called the *Hippotamus*, which when ſhe perceives herſelf fat and unwieldy, moves about upon the ſharpeſt Points of broken Reeds, and having drawn Blood from her Feet and Limbs, afterward cloſes the Wounds with Mud. But *Geſnerus* has not clearly explained what Animal this is, or if there be any ſuch in the World.

Hippo-

Hippocrates was the firſt who authorized Bleeding. After him *Galen* raiſed its Reputation, and extended its Uſe. *Galen* was unanimouſly followed by all ſucceeding Phyſicians down to *Paracelſus*, whoſe Oppoſition did not prevent the Revival of it after his Time, for it flouriſhes to this Day, tho' very differently as to the Application of it. However it has withſtood many great Adverſaries, who condemn it in general, and almoſt without any Exception. Such were among the Ancients, *Chryſippus*, *Ariſtogenes*, *Eraſiſtratus* and *Strato*, and not to mention others, I believe we ought to eſteem *Aſclepiades* one. In modern Times it has been oppoſed by *Paracelſus*, *Helmont*, *Petrus Severinus*, *Crollius*, *Quercetanus*, *Poterius*, *Faber*, *Cruſius*, *Tozzi*, and many other eminent Men.

Now according to the common Way of judging, it cannot be denied, that an Opinion derives Probability from ſuch Names as theſe. And as they not only condemn Bleeding as uſeleſs, but likewiſe as hurtful, it follows, that *probably* Bleeding is always hurtful. So that whoever is blooded incurs a Hazard. If it be ſaid, that the Probability of this Opinion is but ſmall, in compariſon with the much greater that attends the contrary, I an-

ſwer firſt, that *Multa falſa ſunt probabiliora veris*; and in the next place, that tho' the Hazard of Bleeding, as founded in this ſmall Probability, be hitherto inconſiderable, we go on increaſing it, till it will arrive to a more than moderate Stature in Practice. But what hath been ſaid leads to my Purpoſe, for the more Articles concur to found a Doubt, the greater muſt be the Danger.

But if it be urged, that this Opinion is not probable in any Degree, for it contradicts Experience, which continually ſhews Bleeding to be ſalutary in many Caſes, then I appeal to *Hippocrates*, who furniſhes me with an Anſwer in the Maxim, *Experimentum fallax*. Indeed excepting ſome few Accidents, in which Experience ſeems to have declared in favour of Bleeding, and thoſe perhaps might have been better cured by different Methods, it is in all other Caſes extremely doubtful. The Authors who oppoſe Bleeding, were not unacquainted with Experiments; ſo that theſe could not be ſo very manifeſt, ſince they did not convert Them to the common Opinion. Thoſe who blindly follow *Galen*, and recommend Bleeding in all putrid Fevers, do likewiſe defend this Practice by Experience; yet Multitudes conſider it as Barbarity, and Dr. *Martinez* affirms, that

that Artillery itſelf has not diſpatched ſo many as this ſingle Maxim.

Experience being thus uncertain and inconſtant, it is a very weak Foundation to build upon, for all alledge it in their Favour. And the Reaſon is manifeſt. Whatever Method a Phyſician takes with his Patient, unleſs he gives him Poiſon, ſome will die, and others recover. He that favours the Remedy, attributes to it all the Merit, if the Patient ſurvives; or if he dies, accounts for his Death from the inſuperable Force of the Diſeaſe. He that oppoſes the Remedy, imputes to it the Death of the Patient, or if he lives, aſcribes it to the Strength of his Conſtitution. Hence a Death is often unjuſtly imputed to the Phyſician, and his Merit is unreaſonably magnified in a Recovery. The Truth is, that in many Caſes the Patient would live and recover, not only if the Phyſician were to preſcribe a Bleeding extraordinary, but even if he were to ſtab him with a Poniard, his Conſtitution being prepared for either. In the Diary of the *Academia Leopoldina* we read of a Nun, who recover'd from a quotidian Fever, after the Loſs of ten Pounds of Blood drawn from her Veins in the ſpace of two Months. *Valiſnieri*, who communicated this Account to the Aca-

demy, with a View of encouraging in his Profeſſion the Spirit of Bleeding, was asked, what Angel had revealed to him, that the Lady would not have been cured, and perhaps much ſooner, with a more moderate uſe of the Lancet? But it is beſides a fit Subject of Inquiry, what is the State of a Conſtitution, that has undergone ſuch Violence. For there is no doubt but that ſome ſick Perſons, who ſurvive all the rough Treatment of their Phyſician, are reduced to the loweſt Degree of Infirmity, and recover no more than a ſhort and painful Life. The Phyſician in the mean while triumphs, as if he had performed ſome greater Exploit, than protracting the Diſeaſe, and ruining the Conſtitution of the Patient; whereas it is well known, that by a little Confidence in Nature, and a more gentle Treatment, not only Health, but a more robuſt Habit of Body might have been ſecured. The ſame *Valiſnieri* tells us of another Perſon, from whom he drew all the Blood in his Veins, becauſe it was too ſharp, and ſupplied it immediately with a ſufficient Quantity of better conditioned. The Truth of this Fact I leave to the Judgment of the learned Faculty, and only deſire to be informed by the more candid Part of them, what Authority this Experiment

periment may claim in Practice. One thing we may depend upon, that theſe unfair Phyſicians exhibit to us the Caſe of one or two Patients, whoſe Strength of Conſtitution could ſtruggle with any Diſeaſe, and withſtand the Fury of their Doctor, whilſt they conceal the Caſe of infinite Numbers, who periſhed under their Hands. So fallacious, among other things, are moſt of the experimental Obſervations we read in Books, which Phyſicians plead as Authority for their Practice. I conclude then, ſince ſuch is the Fallacy of Experiments, thoſe upon which Bleeding is founded are inſufficient to reject as improbable the Opinion, which abſolutely condemns it.

But ſuppoſing the common Opinion to be true, that Bleeding is proper in various Caſes, which I will not deny, yet a Difficulty remains, as to *Time* and *Quantity*. In the former, there is no certain Rule, for it depends upon the Symptom, and the Strength of the Patient, which one Phyſician judges to be greater, another leſs. On the Subject of *Quantity* there are ſo many and ſuch oppoſite Opinions, that they cannot but create in the Phyſician the utmoſt Confuſion and Doubt, and the moſt manifeſt Danger of a Miſtake. He reads in ſome Authors,

that in ſuch a Diſeaſe and in certain Circumſtances, Bleeding is highly proper and neceſſary. In other Authors he reads, that in the ſame Caſe and the ſame Circumſtances it is highly pernicious; both alledge Reaſon and appeal to Experience. What Courſe ſhall he take? The Sick for the moſt part make no Scruple to obey their Phyſician. They ſee him ſpeak with Confidence, and therefore conclude that his Preſcription is indiſputable. But if, when he directs Bleeding, they were to ſearch twenty or thirty grave and experienced Authors, which are diſtracting the Doctor's Intellects, What Judgment would they form? Or let the Phyſician himſelf maturely weigh the Probability of the Opinions on both Sides, how will it appear, that he has weighed them duly, if they have been differently weighed by Multitudes of others.

Indeed I know not when the common *Galeniſts* ſucceed in Bleeding, but this I know, that Inſtances of their Miſcarriage are innumerable. It is their Practice in general to bleed in a putrid Fever, tho' it be evident from the beſt Authors, and the cleareſt Dictates of Reaſon, that in many ſuch Caſes Bleeding is hurtful; for it impedes, ſuſpends or retards the Work of Fermentation, which being remiſs in itſelf,

itſelf, ſhould rather be forwarded, that Nature might gain the Diſcharge, which by the means of Fermentation ſhe is endeavouring at. A Fever, ſays the incomparable *Sydenham*, and the moſt learned Phyſicians of the preſent Age agree with him, is the Inſtrument by which Nature expels what aggrieves her; "*Cum & febris naturæ* "*inſtrumentum fuerit ad hujus ſecretionis* "*opus debitâ operâ fabricatum.*" And ſoon after, "*Febris naturæ eſt machina* "*ad diffflanda ea, quæ ſanguinem malè* "*habent.*" *Lucas Tozzi* obſerves, that thoſe Diſeaſes are moſt tedious, which do not produce a Fever. And it is univerſally known, that Fevers have great Power in preventing Catarrhs, Convulſions, Attacks of the Gout, and various other Complaints. Notwithſtanding all this our common Doctors conſider a Fever as a dangerous Enemy to be encounter'd only with Bleeding and Purging, that is, with Fire and Sword. *Etmuller* expreſſes himſelf ſtrongly and juſtly upon this Subject. After reciting the Obſervations of ſome Authors, who in opening a Body, found all the Blood conſumed by the Heat of the Fever, which evidences the Miſchief of Evacuation by Bleeding, he concludes thus: "*Itaque ego cum ejuſmodi Lanio-*
"*nibus & Sanguiſugis non facio, qui*
"*vitæ*

" *vitæ theſaurum tam inutiliter abligu-*
" *riunt.*"

I cannot here omit, that the Symptoms, by which Phyſicians diſcover Health or Diſeaſe in the Blood, are very fallacious. The Blood alters ſenſibly as ſoon as it ſprings from the Vein, and every Individual has a different kind, which is ſo adapted to his Conſtitution, that he cannot live without the very Blood, which the Phyſician pronounces to be bad. This ſhews the Abſurdity of the Invention of transfuſing the Blood of a healthful Man into the Veins of a Patient. *Etmuller* is of the ſame Opinion for this Reaſon, " *cum unuſquiſque homo peculiarem ſuum*
" *habeat ſanguinem, & in ſanitatis lati-*
" *tudine maxima ſanguinis ſit varietas.*" Beſides all this, the various Colour of the Blood uſually ariſes from Cauſes very different from thoſe aſſigned by Phyſicians. *Philip Verheyen* the famous Anatomiſt obſerves, that Spirit of Vitriol mixed with the Blood blackens it; therefore the Blackneſs of the Blood is not a certain Sign of *Aduſtion.* The ſame Writer likewiſe affirms from Experiment, that *Alkalis* redden it. In ſhort whoever knows, that two Drops of a red Colour, ſuch as Virgin's Milk, give the Colour of the Milk to a whole Baſon of Water, will think

but

but lightly of what ordinary Philoſophers pretend upon the Cauſes of the Diverſity of Colours.

SECT. VII.

FROM Bleeding let us proceed to Purging, the other Pillar of Medicine, as *Galen* metaphorically calls it. All Phyſicians unanimouſly acknowledge, that Purgatives have more or leſs a deleterious or malignant Quality, ſo that they always contain ſomething noxious. The Queſtion is, whether they are ſalutary in certain Diſeaſes, and at certain Periods of the Diſeaſe; for the Miſchief is infallible, and the Remedy doubtful.

The Patrons of this Branch of Medicine are perſuaded, that Purgatives only expel from the Body *vicious Humors*. I have myſelf labour'd under this Error for ſome time, but my own Experience, and ſome good Authors which I have read, have undeceived me. For certain it is, that they indiſcriminately expel the uſeful and the uſeleſs, and diſſolve, corrupt and precipitate, at once the nutritious Juices with the excrementitious Humors.

It is likewiſe obſervable, that all the Humor, which on Account of its Incapacity of Nutrition is called excrementitious,

is not to be conſider'd as uſeleſs in the Body. Great Part of it has its proper Office, and adminiſters to Nature for certain Purpoſes. Thus the bilious Humor by ſtimulating the Inteſtines, promotes the Expulſion of the groſs Fæces, and the Acid of the Stomach ſerves to excite an Appetite. So that Purgatives are noxious various Ways. Their deleterious Quality leaves a bad Impreſſion, they draw from the Body much of its nutritious Juice, and they diſcharge that, which tho' incapable of Nutrition, is neceſſary for ſome natural Functions. To this may be added the Inconvenience of leading Part of the Excrements thro' Ways, which Nature never deſtined for their Expulſion. It is probable, that this cannot be done without ſome Detriment to thoſe Paſſages. For if the ſharp Humors force their Way thro' narrow Channels, whoſe Pores correſpond not to the Particles of thoſe Humors, they cannot but do ſome Violence to the Fibres.

Cathartics are divided according to their Effect upon the Humours, to which they are appropriated. Thus ſome purge the Choler, others the Phlegm, *&c*, But this Diviſion, tho' generally receiv'd, is, in the Opinion of good Authors, imaginary. They aſſure us, that there is not a Cathartic,

thartic, but what purges promiſcuouſly all kinds of Humors, that fall within the Sphere of its Operation, *i. e.* within the Diſtance to which it can operate; and that the various Colour of the Excrements, according to the Variety of the Purgatives (which is the Deception in this Matter) proceeds from the Tincture which this very Medicine conveys to the Humor. I can truly affirm, that if a Perſon of the beſt Temperament were to repeat a Purgative with Epithyme, which by the Blackneſs of the Fæces, is ſuppos'd to be appropriated to Melancholy, he will always void black or blackiſh Humors. This I am perfectly aſſured of. And it is impoſſible to find ſo much melancholy Humor, I will not ſay in a healthful, but even in a hypochondriac Body, ſince it is that Humor which abounds leaſt in our Bodies.

I ſhall be told perhaps, that notwithſtanding the known Malignity of Purgatives, and that they abſterge the uſeful along with the vicious Humors, yet as the Retention of the latter is more dangerous than the Diſcharge of the former, their Uſe is evident.

This is all that can be ſaid in favour of them. To which I anſwer firſt, that a Phyſician ought to be well aſſured, that

things are in this Situation, leſt he ſhould act like the *Turks* at the Siege of *Rhodes*. Some of their Troops being employed in the Aſſault, and already intermixed with the Chriſtian Garriſon, the *Turks* in the Camp diſcharged their Artillery with equal Fury at both, and made as great a Slaughter of their own Countrymen as of the Enemy.

But in what Caſe can a Phyſician be thus aſſured? In common Diſeaſes very ſeldom, if ever. It is Matter of doubt among them, whether in the Beginning of a Fever they can or ought to purge? *Hippocrates* by his famous Aphoriſm, *Concocta medicari oportet*, forbids it, at leaſt in Caſe of a Turgeſcence, and directs us to defer Purgatives till the Matter is concocted. But when the Matter is concocted, Nature herſelf, as we daily experience, performs the Work of Secretion. So that Purging becomes ſuperfluous, and to preſcribe it would amount to the ſame as ſending auxiliary Troops to our Allies, when they return victorious from the Enemy. I am firmly perſuaded from Reaſon and Experience, that Nature never fails to perfect this Work, except ſhe be obſtructed by an uncommon Accident in ſome extraordinary Caſe. It will be ſaid, that there is Danger of a Relapſe, if the

Patient

Patient neglect to purge after the Concoction of the Matter. But beſides that this is not curing a preſent, but preventing a future Diſeaſe, I would ask, How does the Phyſician know, that the Relapſe, when it happens, ariſes from a Neglect of Purging at that Time? Some relapſe, who have taken this Precaution, and others who have omitted it: whence I ſuſpect, that the Relapſe is not owing to this, but to ſome Portion of morbific Matter not yet put in Motion, to be concocted, throughout the Courſe of the former Diſeaſe, and now moved at the greater Hazard of the Patient, becauſe it encounters his Strength enervated by the former Shock. This may not be certain, but it is doubtful at leaſt, and the Doubt ſuffices to ſhake the Phyſician's Aſſurance, that Purgatives are then neceſſary.

In the next place, a Turgeſcence of Humors is conſidered as a Caſe in the Beginning of which Purgatives are indiſpenſable. But here likewiſe the learned *Martinez* diſputes that Neceſſity. For a Turgeſcence is a reſtleſs and violent Motion of the Humor, which whilſt it threatens to fall upon a vital Part, is endeavouring to diſcharge itſelf on all Sides. This is obſerved in the Beginning of the Small-pox,

and

and the beſt Phyſicians do not preſcribe Purgatives at that Seaſon.

But abating of the Danger which Purgatives threaten, they have not the Power attributed to them, of abſterging from the Body the morbific Matter. When I confided moſt in them, I had Recourſe to them in a Diſeaſe I have long been, and ſtill am afflicted with. The general Symptoms are Heavineſs of my Limbs, a Decay of Appetite, and an Oppreſſion of the Faculties of my Mind, all which uſually laſt two Months more or leſs. I was perſuaded, and my Phyſicians agreed in it, that the whole proceeded from a Load of excrementitious Humor, and conſequently the Remedy was a Purgative. But I proteſt, that it never gave me the leaſt Relief, tho' for the Space of ſix Years, whenever this Diſorder befel me, I tried almoſt every kind of Cathartic, varying both the Kind and Quantity; and I affirm the ſame of Regimen. But my Relief was this; all this Apparatus of Diſeaſe ended in an Eruption of the Size of a few Grains in ſome Part or other of the Body. As I was meditating upon this repeated Experience, it came into my Thoughts, that many of our Diſeaſes ariſe from a very ſmall Quantity of Matter,

ter, which is like a ſtrong Ferment, and by being conceal'd in ſome inacceſſible Receſs of the Body, or for ſome other Reaſon, which I cannot comprehend, is not ſubject to the Operation of Purgatives, but to Nature alone, which keeps her certain ſettled Periods for her Diſcharges, and defies all the Power of Pharmacy to compel her to haſten her Courſe. And when her Period arrives, ſhe diſlodges that powerful, tho' ſeemingly inconſiderable Enemy, in a Puſtule or Pimple. I continued in this Opinion for ſeveral Years, with ſome Diffidence occaſioned by the narrow Compaſs of my Knowledge. At laſt in reading *Etmuller*, I had the Conſolation of finding my Notion patronized by that great Writer. After mentioning (*Inſtit. Medic. part* 3. *cap.* 5.) the prodigious Havock which Purgatives make in the human Body, and how inefficacious they are, he ſays: "*Sane fermenta morboſa minima illa non attingunt. Hinc ſubinde poſt repetitum licèt purgantium uſum, nihilominus morbi contumaces perſiſtunt.*" So that we come to this Point, that Purgatives, beſides the Miſchief they occaſion, paſs by the morbific Matter, thro' the Branches; except when that Matter is in the *primæ Viæ*, in which Caſe there is no doubt of their Utility.

But

But the Caſe itſelf is often doubtful; for it is frequently Subject of Diſpute among Phyſicians, whether the morbific Matter be in the *primæ Viæ* or not.

As to the Choice of Purgatives, every Phyſician indulges his own Fancy, and there is not a Medicine of this ſort, but what hath its particular Patrons. It is uſual to prefer thoſe that operate moſt gently, and without the leaſt Convulſion of the Inteſtines. I confeſs myſelf to have ſtrong Apprehenſions, that this Choice is founded in an Error. For perhaps the Commotion does not ariſe immediately from the Medicine, but from the ſharp Humor it excites. If this be the Caſe, then thoſe Purgatives are beſt, which diſorder the Bowels, for they expel the acrimonious Humors; and we have reaſon to avoid the deceitful Gentleneſs of thoſe that evacuate without Pain. It is poſſible that by their occult Malignity, they diſſolve a great Part of the nutritious Juice, whoſe Sweetneſs blunts the Acrimony of the excrementitious Humors, that in paſſing they may create no Pain. If Purgatives were elective, it might be ſaid, that theſe gentle ones only evacuate the mild and innocent Humors, which being of ſo ſoft a Nature, do no Violence to the Veſſels thro' which they paſs. This is only my own

Opinion,

Opinion, which I ſubmit with all Docility to the Examination of any learned Phyſician, or other Perſon, ſince it has not the Patronage of any Claſſic Author.

After Purgatives, it is natural to ſay ſomething of their Companion and Subſtitute a Clyſter, which Phyſicians preſcribe when they have no time for Purges, to open the Body, if it be not relax'd of itſelf, upon the Suppoſition of which there is no Hazard in the Uſe of gentle Clyſters. But the Suppoſition is not ſo clear; for *Sydenham* ſtrictly forbids the Uſe of thoſe, and all other Evacuations, in all thoſe Fevers, in which the Fermentation is ſomewhat remiſs, for they will retard it more. Beſides this he condemns them in all Fevers in general at the time of their Declenſion to ſuch a Degree, that he affirms of himſelf, that he ſtudies during the Declenſion to keep the Patient's Body coſtive. And it is well known, that in a Method of treating Fevers, the Name of *Sydenham* alone will render an Opinion probable. Let him therefore reconcile theſe Meaſures, who labours to defend the Coherence and Safety of Medical Preſcriptions.

SECT. VIII.

IN ſhort nothing is ſafe in Medicine. One Phyſician abhors a Remedy which another paſſionately admires. What Miſchiefs do not ſome impute to Hellebore, and what Virtues do not others aſcribe to it! The ſame of Antimony. Precious Stones were once the principal Requiſites in a Diſpenſary; now they are rejected by the beſt Authors, not merely as uſeleſs, but as hurtful. And for my part I think the meaneſt medicinal Herb in the Field of more real Utility, than all the Emeralds imported from the Eaſt. What ſhall we ſay of the infinite Number of Cordials, which are ſo only in Name? Gold may rejoice the Heart when amaſſed in a Cheſt, not infuſed into the Stomach. And how ſhall the native Heat extract any thing from it, if the moſt active Fire cannot alter its Property? The Virtue of *Lapis Bezoar*, which is Part of every Cordial Preſcription, is a mere Fable, if we give due Credit to *Nicholas Bocangelino*, Phyſician to the Emperor *Charles* V. And *Rubeo*, Phyſician to Pope *Clement* VIII. affirms, that he frequently uſed the beſt *Bezoar*, which the Power of Princes and Nobles could procure, and never experienced

rienced any Virtue in them. Many others have confirmed the ſame.

Moſt Phyſicians and all Apothecaries approve of thoſe Medicines, that are moſt coſtly and rare. There are, as *Pliny* obſerves, who preſcribe the Aſhes of the Phœnix: "*Petitis etiam ex nido Phœnicis, cinereq;* "*Medicinis.*" The ſame is true of Exotic Medicines, and thoſe that come from far Countries. Phyſicians find their Account in them by diſplaying their Knowledge, and Druggiſts by increaſing their Fortune. But, as the ſame *Pliny* elſewhere obſerves, and Experience ſhews, the cheap and common Remedies are moſt uſeful and ſecure. "*Ulceri parvo Medi-*"*cina à Rubro mari importatur; cum re-*"*media vera pauperrimus quiſque cœnet.*"

Monſieur *Duncan*, a Doctor of *Montpelier*, takes notice, that ſome famous *French* Phyſician preſcribed Coffee univerſally to all his Patients. Yet the Majority are now of Opinion, that not great Matters are to be expected in the medicinal Way from either Tea or Coffee. Nay the moſt noted Specificks are not free from Exceptions. It is well known, that many are at this time Enemies to the Bark, and which is yet more extraordinary, *Fernelius* declames againſt Mercury, tho' without Reaſon, ſince all the

World is a Witneſs of the ſingular Power of that noble Medicine.

This Inconſtancy in Phyſic from the Diverſity of Opinions occaſions a Variation of Modes. The Power of Faſhion is as prevalent in Phyſic as in Dreſs. One Medicine no ſooner gains Credit, than another loſes it. And this Science in the Remedies it propoſes, reſembles *Alexander* in his Conqueſts, who was victorious wherever he advanced, at the Expence of the Kingdoms he left behind him. All Medicines at their firſt Compoſition were *moſt famous* and *celebrated:* Hence thoſe pompous Epithets, which they aſſume as their Surnames, *Aquæ Angelica*, the Golden Julep, *&c.* And at preſent neither thoſe, nor the Pills *ſine quibus*, nor all the other noble and infallible Specifics recommended by *Azibar*, venture to diſpute Precedency with the *Engliſh* Salts, which is a Medicine I am doubtful of for the very Reaſon of their Purging ſo gently. But theſe or any others that now are Sovereign, will be dethroned by freſh Uſurpers; for this has always been the Fate of Medicine. " *Mutatur ars* " *quotidie interpolis, & ingeniorum Græ-* " *ciæ flatu impellimur.*"

And what ſhall we ſay of the Virtues falſly attributed to many Medicines? The Authority

Authority of *Valeſius* may ſuffice on this head, who affirms, that Phyſicians ſpeak with leſs Truth and Certainty on no Subject than this: "*Facile conceſſerim nullâ* "*de re nugari magis Medicos, quam de* "*Medicamentorum viribus.*"

SECT. IX.

TO conclude this Eſſay on the Practice of Phyſic, I beg leave to add one important Piece of Advice, that the beſt and choiceſt Medicines are hurtful in large Quantities;

Impediunt certè Medicamina plura ſalutem.

This is the Rock againſt which moſt of our Doctors ſplit. "*Tyrones mei,*" ſays *Baglivi*, "*quàm paucis Remediis curan-* "*tur Morbi! Quàm plures è vita tollit* "*remediorum farrago!*" *Sydenham* complains of this Exceſs in ſeveral Paſſages, and adviſes his Brethren to be more backward in preſcribing Medicines, and rather to truſt to Nature, it being a great Error to imagine, that every Caſe requires the Aſſiſtance of Art.

Indeed this infamous Practice is not ſo much owing to the Advice of the Phyſician,

ſician, as to the Weakneſs of Patients, who importune them to preſcribe daily and almoſt hourly. This is the great Miſtake of the Vulgar in the Uſe of Medicine. They eſteem him a learned Phyſician, who inceſſantly heaps Medicine upon Medicine; and after this tyrannical and inhuman Proceeding has brought the Patient to his Grave, they boaſt of having given him all the Relief which the Medical Art would afford; tho' it is well known, that the Aſſiſtance he had was ſtupid Ignorance, or more generally criminal Condeſcenſion. Theſe officious Doctors, (ſays *Leonard Botalus*, Phyſician to *Henry* III. of *France*,) who preſcribe whatever their Patients deſire, are the moſt pernicious of all.

Thoſe who maintain the Opinion of critical Days, have but one Anſwer to make to the Objection, that Experience does not favour, but rather contradicts them. The unſeaſonable Uſe of Remedies, ſay they, hinders and ſometimes precipitates the Courſe of Nature. But from hence ariſe two Conſequences: Firſt, that all Phyſicians err in the Uſe of Remedies, ſince, as *Tozzi* aſſures us, there is not one, if he were ingenuouſly to confeſs the Truth, who obſerves the Criſis regular, at certain Periods. In the next Place,

Place, the Phyſician, to avoid any Interruption of the Work of Nature, muſt remain ſo inactive, as not to preſcribe at all, ſince there is not a Medicine, but what affects the Patient more or leſs. But Dr. *Boix* has already ſaid enough upon this head. I will not affirm, that his Rules are to be implicitly followed, but this I know, that the Multitude of Medicines preſcribed by common Phyſicians, cannot but conſiderably weaken Nature at a Time, when ſhe has moſt Occaſion for Vigour to enable her to combat her Enemy; and it cannot but diſturb the Work ſhe is engaged in of preparing the morbific Matter for Secretion.

It would be a vain Attempt to perſuade thoſe Phyſicians, whoſe Miſtakes on this Subject ariſe from Ignorance, for Stupidity is ever indocil. It would likewiſe be needleſs to addreſs thoſe, if any ſuch there be, who preſcribe againſt their own Knowledge, upon Conſiderations of Friendſhip to the Apothecary, or of Intereſt in the Conſumption of Medicines; for the Soul of ſuch a Doctor will ſuffer more by his Practice, than the Health of any Patient. I ſay, if there be any ſuch; for to accuſe the Generality of Phyſicians of Iniquity like this, would amount to the inſolent Calumny of *Cornelius Agrippa* in

in his Book *De Vanitate Scientiarum.* I have on the contrary obſerved great Honour and Integrity among the Gentlemen of that Profeſſion, which may be attributed to the frequent Occaſions they have of hearing edifying Language, and ſeeing Examples of Chriſtian Piety, in the Chambers of the Sick, eſpecially where the Caſe is dangerous.

Some there are, and thoſe not a few, who preſcribe more than their Judgment dictates, in order to preſerve their Credit. They ſee themſelves ſinking in Eſteem, deſerted, and others called in, if they do not daily preſcribe ſome freſh Medicine. Theſe I muſt remind of the ſtrong Obligation they are under in Conſcience, not to act againſt their Judgment upon any Conſideration, whether it be of Reſpect, or of Convenience, or of Honour; for certain it is, that neither the Risk of loſing their Patients, nor of diſpleaſing Apothecaries, nor of being thought ignorant by the unknowing, will excuſe them in the Sight of God for whatever Miſchiefs may ariſe to the Patient from any thing noxious and ſuperfluous in the Preſcription.

Some hit upon the Medium, and preſcribe in order to give Satisfaction, that is, they preſcribe innocent things, from which if no good, at leaſt no hurt can

ariſe

ariſe. But if what they preſcribe fall under the Denomination of Medicines, it muſt affect the Patient, and conſequently if it does him no good, it muſt in a greater or leſs Degree do him hurt. Beſides this, the Phyſician has no right to compel the Patient to ſpend his Subſtance upon Medicines, which he knows to be uſeleſs. He is obliged without doubt to make him Reſtitution. It is no Apology to plead the Patient's Requeſt; for certainly it was not the Patient's Requeſt, that he might be at the Expence of Medicines, which the Phyſician knows to be uſeleſs to him. And were the Doctor to inſiſt continually upon the Uſeleſneſs of a Medicine, the Patient would hardly purchaſe it even at *prime Coſt*.

SECT. X.

SINCE ſo many Articles concur to expoſe the Uncertainty of Phyſic, I ſhall be asked by ſome, How it comes to paſs, that the Experience and Obſervation of all Ages have not yet diſcovered when and how far it is uſeful and pernicious? But I have already anſwered this in what hath been ſaid upon the Fallibility of Experience, and ſhall only add, that the Ob-

ſervations, which we find collected in ſome Authors, inſtead of undeceiving, increaſe the Deception, and are ſo defective, as not to merit the Name of Obſervations. Many are founded upon only a ſingle Experiment, which is fallacious in many Reſpects. It often happens, that an oſtentatious Phyſician gives an unfair Account of one Caſe in which a Medicine has ſucceeded, and omits two in which it has not. Sometimes the Circumſtances are not accurately obſerved, moſt of them being ſuch as might concur to render the ſame Medicine effectual, in the ſame Diſeaſe, at one Time, and pernicious at another. It may happen in a Caſe reported by an Obſerver, that different unconnected Remedies have been applied, and it is difficult to know, which wrought the Cure, tho' the Phyſician endeavours to attribute it to that which himſelf preſcribed or patronizes; and if different Phyſicians are conſulted ſucceſſively, each claims the Merit to his own Preſcription, tho' perhaps the Recovery did not commence till long after. It is obſervable again, that moſt Diſeaſes, for which Medical Authors direct a Cure, are curable by Nature, and in fact we ſee ſome recover daily without any Medicine; whence I infer, that the Phyſi-

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cian cannot know whether the Cure be the Work of his Art, or of Nature.

The Obſervations of *Riverius* are generally known and approved. And tho' they amount to four hundred in Number, almoſt every one is defective in one or other of the Articles above-mentioned. It is pleaſant to read him boaſting (*Cent.* 4. *Obſerv.* 75.) of the Cure of a bilious Colic by four Bleedings, and four Purges, interlarded with Clyſters, Emollients, Anodynes, and other Medicines. This Method muſt neceſſarily have required many Days, and it is well known, that the Diſeaſe, if left to Nature or treated with more Lenity, is generally curable in a few; and probably this Recovery was delayed, becauſe the Cruelty of the Phyſician deſtroyed the Strength of the Patient. How often does the ſame Author, after having interpolated various Remedies, aſcribe the Victory in an arbitrary Manner to his *Aqua Theriacalis*, or ſome other Medicine of his own Invention! Much more might be ſaid to ſhew the Inutility of his Obſervations, which are only nominally ſo. To make uſeful Obſervations requires great Knowledge, Sagacity, and Sincerity, Qualities which are not to be found in every Obſerver. Some modern Authors indeed have laboured with more

Care and Diſcretion on this Head, than the Ancients; and if the reſt in publiſhing their Accounts would imitate theſe, there would be Room to hope for great Improvement in a Science, which is hitherto very imperfect.

SECT. XI.

I KNOW not whether it will be very acceptable to Phyſicians to ſee the Uncertainty of their Science thus expoſed. Whatever the Merit of theſe Reflexions may be, ſome will immediately take Offence. Thoſe of little Learning and narrow Underſtandings I preſume to be my declared Enemies, becauſe they flatter themſelves, the Author they are attached to contains a Treaſure of infallible Knowledge. They have moreover reaſon to apprehend, that an Averſion to Medicine muſt be immediately followed by a Diſguſt to Phyſicians; and in that Caſe their Fortune and Importance are at ſtake. But they need not give way to their Fears. The World will always be the ſame it hath been; and there is not a Genius powerful enough to ſtem the impetuous Torrent of Prejudice and univerſal Cuſtom. How much have both Phyſic and Phyſicians ſuffer'd, and indeed with-

without great Regard to Truth, from *Quevedo* in *Spain*, from *Petrarch* in *Italy*, from *Montaigne* and *Moliere* in *France*! Theſe eminent Writers are read and celebrated; yet the Courſe of the World is the ſame. I ſhall content myſelf, if I can have the good Fortune to perſuade ſome few, that they are loſing their Lives by the very means, by which they endeavour to recover their Health.

Among diſcreet and learned Phyſicians I ſhall be well received; for ſome are ſo candid and generous as themſelves to confeſs the Inſufficiency of Medicine, and their own Perplexity. Others, who are not endued with this Nobleneſs of Soul, will not be diſpleaſed indeed to find that too great a Confidence is generally placed in Medicine; but as this low Eſtimation of their Art reflects upon the Profeſſors of it, it muſt be unpleaſant to them to ſee their Profeſſion attacked. Perhaps this was the Motive, that inſtigated ſome Writers againſt Dr. *Boix*, whoſe Sincerity and public Spirit merited a different Treatment.

And it appears from Experience, that ſome learned Doctors thro' mere Policy conceal their Opinion, that there is no Security in their Art. *Baglivi*, who laments at large the unhappy State of Medicine,

dicine, nevertheleſs more than once cenſures thoſe few Authors, who have expoſed its Fallibility to the World, and treats them as injudicious, becauſe by this Diſcovery they invalidate the Authority of Practitioners. *Gaſpar de los Reyes*, in his Elyſian Fields, carries the Uncertainty of his Profeſſion ſo far, that he thinks there is not a Caſe, in which a Phyſician can act with Aſſurance of Succeſs. Thus, ſpeaking of himſelf and others, he ſays, "*Quis enim eſt, qui ſemel non erret? Aut* "*quis qui ſemel tantum erret? Dubito an* "*ſemper non erremus.*" And in another Place he acknowledges, that the moſt able Phyſicians are frequently miſtaken in the Cure of a Diſeaſe. Notwithſtanding this he was not inclined to make the ſame Confeſſion univerſally; for after having mentioned, that Phyſicians might confeſs their Errors to the diſcrete and learned, as to Perſons who are ſenſible of the great Obſcurity and inſuperable Difficulties of the Science, he adds, that it is proper to conceal them from the rude and ignorant Vulgar, who imagine there is more Knowledge in the Phyſician, than in truth there is, or can be. The Reaſon he pleads for this Artifice is, that an Acknowledgment of Errors is of no Uſe either to the Phyſician or to the Patient.

But I think on the contrary, that the Truth thus expoſed is of eminent Uſe both to Patients and to Phyſicians. To the ſick, becauſe it ſhews them the little Security there is in Medicine; "That there is hardly a Remedy free from Danger;" "that the moſt eminent Phyſicians, in point of Learning, commit various Errors;" "that very often when the Patient recovers, he owes it to Nature alone, and is obliged to the Phyſician for no more than the ill Office of retarding the Work of Nature;" with many other Particulars to the ſame Purpoſe. The Conſequence of this Diſcovery will be, "that they will be leſs inclined to medicinal Applications," and therefore "will preſerve their Strength in its natural Degree of Perfection;" "they will not needleſly, and ſometimes with notorious Detriment to their Conſtitutions, waſte their Subſtance in the Shops of Apothecaries;" "they will leave to Nature thoſe little accidental Diſeaſes, which ſhe herſelf can cure, and in which, ſuppoſing Medicine to give ſome Relief, it is not equal to the Miſchief done thereby in other Reſpects;" "they will content themſelves with obſerving a due Regimen, and will bear with the little Complaints now and then ariſing from habitual and perhaps hereditary

tary Diſeaſes, knowing that, as they are an inſeparable Part of their Conſtitution, no Phyſician in the World can cure them, whatever they may pretend about radical Cures, which are not to be found in Nature. Many delicate and tender Ladies will upon this Diſcovery ceaſe to moleſt their Husbands and Families. Many worthy Men will be uſeful to the Public, who render themſelves uſeleſs, by having recourſe to Medicines in every Diſorder real or imaginary. Theſe and other Advantages ariſing from a Knowledge of the little that is to be expected from Medicine, have induced me to publiſh this Tract, and Phyſicians themſelves, as hath been ſaid before, ought in Conſcience to contribute their Part towards undeceiving the World.

To Phyſicians this Expoſition of the Difficulties of their Art is of great Uſe, at leaſt to the learned and eminent of the Profeſſion, who can never want Salaries and Practice, unleſs a Caſe ſhould happen, which I ſee no Reaſon for, that all Phyſicians ſhould be baniſhed from the World, as it is ſaid they once were from *Rome*. They will ſpare themſelves the Trouble of needleſs Importunities from the Sick, and of impertinent and ridiculous Applications from Perſons in Health. They

will ceaſe to be ſo continually importuned by the vapouriſh Lady, whoſe Unhappineſs is greateſt, when the Doctor is abſent from her Pulſe; or by that ſtrange imaginary Patient, humorouſly expoſed by *Moliere*, who is afflicted unleſs he can perſuade himſelf he is diſeaſed; nor by the decrepit old Gentleman, who flatters himſelf that medicinal Drugs have the Power of keeping him at a diſtance from the Grave. There will conſequently be much Time to ſpare for Study, for Reflexion upon their Studies and Experiments, and for Attendence at Anatomical Diſſections. And thoſe who are eminent for their Learning and Skill, will be at leiſure to write Books. Thus Phyſicians will become more learned, and their Science will advance daily towards the Perfection it is capable of.

I am not an Enemy to Phyſic; on the contrary I eſteem it much. I know that the Scriptures recommend it; tho' it might be anſwered, that the Phyſic recommended in Scripture, is not the ſame which is now practiſed. There are doubtleſs Diſeaſes, which Nature alone cannot cure, and which ſhe may cure by the Aſſiſtance of Medicine, as appears in the Venereal Diſeaſe. I acknowledge, that in Caſes of manifeſt Danger it is prudent

to haſten to her Aſſiſtance, and that frequently the ſudden Appearance of a ſalutary Effect is an Indication, that it is the Effect of a Remedy applied in time. I am ſenſible, that Opium, the Bark, Emetics, and many other Medicines of manifeſt Activity have performed Wonders. All I am offended at is, that the Promiſes of Phyſicians extend beyond the Extent of their Science and Power; that they are wandring in the dark, whilſt they pretend to be crowned with Rays.

It is poſſible, that here and there my Expreſſion may have been too ſtrong in repreſenting the Hazards of a Cure, but this is a Piece of Prudence authorized by the higheſt Examples. For the Bulk of Mankind being generally diſpoſed to a blind implicit Aſſent to all the Preſcriptions of the moſt ignorant Phyſician, it is neceſſary to incline them ſomewhat to the oppoſite Extreme, that between both they may fall upon the due Medium. And tho' I have been ſupported throughout this Diſcourſe by the Authority of eminent Medical Authors; for whatever hath been alledged of my own, I have not laid down as a Rule, but propoſed as a Doubt; yet if any one ſhall think fit to honour me with an Anſwer, he will give me occaſion to add, in a ſeparate Treatiſe

tiſe, many things here omitted, leſt this Diſcourſe ſhould ſwell to an immoderate Size.

I beg leave by way of Concluſion, to recommend to the Public the following Particulars, as worthy of Attention in the Choice of a Phyſician. *Firſt*, let him be a good Chriſtian. For if he remembers the ſtrict Account he is to give to God for his Negligence, he will attend more ſeriouſly to the Diſcharge of his Duty, and apply more earneſtly to the Study of his Profeſſion. In the *ſecond* Place, let him have much Judgment, and little Fire in his Conſtitution; for that natural Fire is apt to overpower the Reaſon even of thoſe that have moſt Diſcretion. The *third* Qualification is, that he be not oſtentatious of the Power and Safety of his Art; for as it is certain, that his Art can pretend to no ſuch Security, it follows that his Pretences argue either Ignorance or Deception. In the *fourth* Place, I would not have him devoted to any Syſtem of Philoſophy, ſo as to regulate his Practice by it; for ſuch a Phyſician will be more expoſed to Error, than he who follows his own Experience, and that of the beſt Practical Authors. Let his *fifth* Merit be that of not accumulating Medicines, eſpecially of the higher kind, ex-

cept in a Caſe of the moſt preſſing Exigency, which admits not the leaſt Delay; for it is certain, that the Phyſician who preſcribes many Medicines, is a very bad Phyſician, even tho' he ſhould retain in his Memory all that hath been written on the Subject of Phyſic.

Let him, in the *ſixth* Place, obſerve and inform himſelf accurately of the Symptoms of Diſeaſes, which are many, and ariſe from various Springs. Moſt Phyſicians feel the Pulſe and view the Urine, and having done this with great Inattention, immediately take Pen in hand to preſcribe. The Pulſe is a very obſcure, and the Urine a very fallible Symptom; nor can any ſecure Judgment be formed of the Diſeaſe and of its Cauſes (except in here and there a Caſe, where they are manifeſt) without conſidering the Complication of many Circumſtances, partly concomitant and partly antecedent. It is owing to the Phyſician's Neglect of theſe, that ſo great Errors are committed in the Accounts of Diſeaſes. How often has a coſtive Habit been miſtaken for Flatulency, and *vice verſâ!*

In the *ſeventh* Place, let the Event in general anſwer to his Prognoſtics. I ſay *in general*, for to be infallible on this head is not the Prerogative of Men, but

of

of Angels. This ſingle Qualification may ſupply almoſt all the foregoing ones; for by this alone a Perſon of the loweſt Underſtanding may diſtinguiſh a learned Phyſician from an ignorant Pretender. It is certain, that he who ſucceeds in his Prognoſtic, knows the preſent State of the Diſeaſe; ſince from its preſent State only its future State can be known. On the other Side, he who generally miſtakes in Prognoſtication, certainly knows not a Word of Medicine. As he who in his Almanack miſcalculates the Times of the Moon and the Eclipſes, undoubtedly knows not a Word of Aſtronomy.

Some conſider the Art of Prognoſticating as diſtinct from that of healing; and thus it is uſual to extol one Phyſician for the former, another for the latter. But this is a manifeſt Error; for according to what hath been ſaid, it is impoſſible that he ſhould be ſafe in point of Cure, who miſtakes in point of Prognoſtic. His Miſtake muſt proceed from his not having formed a right Judgment of the Diſeaſe; and if his Judgment of the Diſeaſe be erroneous, how can the Cure ſucceed, unleſs by mere Chance? Nay tho' it be poſſible for him to fail in his Cure, who ſucceeds in his Prognoſtic, and for him to

ſucceed

ſucceed in curing, who prognoſticates ill, yet the former deſerves higher Eſteem than the latter. The Reaſon is ſtrong and important; for a Miſtake in the Cure hazards only the temporal Health of the Body; a Miſtake in Prognoſtication endangers the eternal Happineſs of the Soul. In a malignant and treacherous Diſeaſe the ignorant Doctor pronounces it of no Moment, perhaps a trifling Crudity upon the Stomach, which a Julep will remove before the next Day. Upon this Aſſurance the Patient and his Attendants neglect the Chriſtian Preparations for Death. In the mean time a ſudden Delirium ſeizes the Fort of Reaſon, and the ſick Perſon dies, not only in the manner of a Heathen, but very much like an irrational Creature. Alas! how much of this Miſchief proceeds from permitting many ignorant Pretenders to aſſume the Practice of Phyſic. The greateſt, and indeed the only Crime imputed to theſe unskilful Phyſicians, is that of murdering the Body. But this is not their principal Guilt. They are frequently chargeable with the Deſtruction of the Soul.

Others more cautious, and rather more treacherous, uſe a common Artifice in following the oppoſite Plan. If a Patient

fall

fall into their Hands with the leaſt feveriſh Symptom, they immediately appear alarmed, declare it a dangerous Caſe, contract their Brows, aſſume an Air of Concern, give various Orders, ſpread an Anxiety throughout the Family, and by way of Comfort promiſe frequent Viſits, and all the Aſſiſtance of their Art. After all this Prevention the Conſequence is, that if the Patient dies, the Skill of the Doctor is extolled, for having diſcover'd at once the latent Malignity of the Diſeaſe. If he recovers, they magnify the Cure, and thank Providence for having ſent him a Phyſician whoſe Learning and Judgment were equal to the Violence of Nature.

It is true, that ſuch a Phyſician doth not occaſion his Patient to die unprepar'd; but it often happens, that he dies of an imaginary Diſeaſe; for if all this Apparatus affects a puſillanimous Patient, he is dejected and terrified, till a ſlight Indiſpoſition becomes mortal. Both are Conſequences bad enough; but of the two, the former is worſe. Let thoſe Phyſicians, who enter upon their Profeſſion, without being previouſly qualified by Study and Reflexion, or who undertake more Patients than they have leiſure to attend, conſider, that the Angels, to whom the Care

Care of the Sick is committed, will one Day accuſe them in the Preſence of God, and place before their Eyes, both the Patients that die prematurely by their means, and (I tremble to mention the Guilt) thoſe who are condemned to die by their pretending Ignorance.

FINIS.